

NEWS RELEASE

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Europe, Learning and Skills Council and Yorkshire Forward fund ground-breaking Academy for Community Leadership

The Academy for Community Leadership - a new ground-breaking £4.5 million initiative is being funded by Objective 1, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and Yorkshire Forward. Objective 1 is providing £2.25 million from the European Social Fund with match funding coming from the other agencies.

“Though most successful communities have one or two key people who have the vision and motivation to drive regeneration forward and most effective organisations and groups will have someone at a local level that holds it all together, organisations can struggle if these key people move on. We need to increase the pool of potential leaders. Also, many local activists work without formal recognition to make their communities better places. We need to recognise their commitment” said Jackie Mould of Objective 1.

The Academy will address these issues by offering a range of support for people involved in community regeneration particularly:

- High quality formal and non-formal learning opportunities for people who are or have the potential to become community leaders
- Accredited training programmes from introductory to higher education level
- Information resources and research capabilities to contribute to understanding of regeneration and the sharing of best practice
- Opportunities for networking and personal development

The skills that activists acquire will be directly transferable to the labour market.

The work of the Academy will be led and co-ordinated by Barnsley-based Northern College, which has significant expertise in community-based learning and education. It will seek out the best training and learning providers and develop new accredited courses as needed to be delivered in local communities. The Academy will have an office at The Source, the innovative training centre of excellence, adjacent to Meadowhall Shopping Centre that is also funded from Europe through the Objective 1 Programme

Jackie Mould has driven the development of the Academy from her original concept through to its imminent launch. She said: "South Yorkshire has many talented volunteers who are working hard to help their communities become better places to live and work. The Academy will help to ensure that they can develop their skills and experience as well as letting many others have the opportunity to gain useful qualifications. The Academy will soon open for business, anybody who is interested in learning more, whether as a potential student or training provider should contact John Chapman at Northern College on 01226 776000."

LSC South Yorkshire Executive Director, John Korzeniewski, said: "The Academy for Community Leadership will fill a very important gap in the empowerment of learners at individual community level. Encouraging, supporting and accrediting the skills of local people as they help and encourage others into learning is a significant strengthening of an important route into learning. The LSC believes that supporting these important first steps in learning will encourage increasing numbers to gain new skills and qualifications. Local recognition of the achievements of local people will be a step change in the career plans and opportunities of many people."

Helen Thompson, Head of Inclusion and Skills at Yorkshire Forward said: "The Academy of Community Leaders is a key investment in the communities of South Yorkshire. We want to see greater sustainable community involvement in regeneration and this is an example we want to see succeed."

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Notes for Editors:

The Objective 1 Programme in South Yorkshire is a £1.8 billion investment programme that draws on over £700 million from the European Union's Structural Funds that are provided to help Europe's poorest areas regenerate their economies and create jobs. South Yorkshire is one of those poorest areas with fewer businesses and fewer and less well-paid jobs than other European regions.

South Yorkshire was designated as an Objective 1 area, which is the highest category of European support, at the Berlin Summit in 1999 along with Merseyside, Cornwall and the Scillies and West Wales and the Valleys. The Objective 1 Programme in South Yorkshire was launched in July 2000 and runs until the end of 2006.

To date the Programme has committed £300 million of European money to more than 300 projects in South Yorkshire. Objective 1 funds are:

- supporting the development of new businesses,
- supporting firms to set up or relocate in South Yorkshire,
- helping businesses to innovate and grow,
- supporting the development of skills and training,
- supporting social enterprises,
- supporting the economic development of deprived communities in South Yorkshire
- helping to bring forward the development of sites and premises for increased economic activity
- and helping to tackle both financial and transport bottlenecks that constrain economic growth.

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